

Dancing in That Art Film on the Beach in November

We took a sprinter van to the beach in Far Rockaway that November. It was as cold as a witch's tit. We wore

nothing but tights and leotards, and our feet were as bare as the truth. We took a sprinter van

to the film set on the beach in Far Rockaway where the wind flung sand at our eyes and our bodies,

abrading our skin the way tires rub the road. We wore black leotards over tights, with nothing to break the wind

or guard against the cold but the thin skin of our desire, on the set of that art film on the beach

in Far Rockaway that November. My friend Holly was the choreographer. The film was about war,

about birth and death and rebirth, about Armageddon. The wind stung our eyes

and the cold stung our cheeks and our bare feet tingled, froze, and went numb. But the show must go on!

Besides dancers, there was a pregnant actress wearing a diaphanous white gown who had to walk out

of the ocean at the beginning of the film. She was supposed to represent the Great Mother of Humanity.

I was too cold myself to feel sorry for her, walking out of the ocean all wet and shivering. Besides, the show

must go on, so we kept dancing on the wet sand in the freezing cold at that beach in Far Rockaway

that November. My friend Holly was the choreographer. She said to suck it up, so we did. We sucked up the cold

and wet but were still miserable on that beach in Far Rockaway that November. There was

a lot of rolling in the sand, lengthwise, our bodies long like the day. We crawled out of the actress's

womb at the ocean's edge. We rolled in the wet sand
in the freezing cold. I was the smallest

and the lightest, so I got thrown around
a lot in that dance. But Holly said to suck it up,

to forget about the freezing cold and to roll
on the wet sand, our bodies as long as the day,

to crawl out of the actress's diaphanous womb,
to dance on the beach and quit griping about the cold.

Be thrilled to have been chosen! If you want to make it
as an artist in this world, then you can't be griping

about the cold, even if you are rolling in the wet sand
on the beach in Far Rockaway in November. So

our eyes stung, and our cheeks stung,
and our feet tingled and went numb,

but we were glad to be the chosen ones, glad to be
chosen to dance in that art film in the cold,

rolling on the sand at the beach in Far Rockaway
that November. And our feet were as bare as our truth,

and our skins were thin with desire, and our bodies
stretched long as the day.

Affirmation
(from Audre Lorde's "Erotic as Power")

The erotic
power of

female

consciousness can be illusory
within the context of male power.

women, we
have been
psychically milked
for

that sensation

self

work
is

erotic
For the erotic is

our lives

women
is
sex

power and
also profoundly cruel.

our work

aspires to
the truth.

The ruling obsession is

political the bridge is sensual

[Redacted]

The physical

way my body stretches upon writing a poem

is a measure of feeling joy

that joy is

intense

color

intense

energy

truth

the erotic

is

self-empowered

love.

This

erotic

power

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] is [REDACTED] women [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] sharing [REDACTED]
creative [REDACTED]
energy [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] self-affirming [REDACTED] that [REDACTED] is [REDACTED]

But for a Pair of Purple Cowboy Boots

No poetry, no roses,
no dewy orchids to tend. No song
in her heart. No tresses, no sparkle,
and mint has overtaken the garden.
Play Doh under her fingernails
and in the cracks of her knuckles. Sigh
and sigh and sigh. Her husband
likes to fuck in the mornings,
so she does. After he leaves for work,
she throws the boy's little wet undies
and wet sheets into the washer. Cheerios
with milk for him. Cheerios
without milk for the girl. Now
the car. He has to pee again. Back inside.
Back out again. The girl-child cries.
The boy-child cries. Marie's life
right now is a prison sentence. She goes
nowhere. Does nothing. Well,
she does her time. While the monsters
are at school, she sits cross-legged
on the hardwood floor and searches
the internet for the perfect pair
of purple cowboy boots. She looks
at porn: suck and fuck and lick
slick thick. On Craig's List,
she finds a virtual girlfriend. Rub and rub
and lick slick thick. Shower. Without
her glasses, the whole world looks
steamy. In the closet, a sheet. White,
white, white. She tears strips. Braids them
long. Makes a loop (it's a noose,
just say it.). There is a hook on
the ceiling that used to hold a chandelier
before the boy smashed it
with one hard kick of his soccer ball. She
checks eBay and Poshmark, but there
are no purple cowboy boots
to be found anywhere. Well, that settles it.
The hook holds the long white braid
of sheets and the noose tightens
around her neck. This is freedom. This
is poetry. Her life right now is
a prison sentence. This is the way out.

Baby Hummingbird Drinks Juice from a Raspberry

As she folds his shirts, she stares out the window
at the yard, where a hummingbird shimmers, drinking

from the tiny white flowers on that tree by the fence,
the tree that used to be a weed. The girls play

among the roots, making mud houses
for their Barbies. Before she married their father,

Bonnie had asked God for a sign and on her way home,
she'd seen a vandalized angel statue on its side

on top of an overpass. The angel had been
spray-painted black. Though she suspected

that the angel had been sent by God, Bonnie married
her husband anyway. She is a very good wife.

The girls are homeschooled, so playing in the mud
qualifies as a science lesson. When Bonnie's husband

punched her in the throat, she knew she ought to have
heeded God's warning. Another hummingbird

appears by the tree, its blur of wings iridescent
in the sunshine. Bonnie saw a baby hummingbird

on Facebook the other day and was enthralled
by its size. It was about the size of a jellybean. It rested

in the palm of someone's hand, drinking juice
from a raspberry nearly twice its size. By the time

Bonnie's husband had the affair, they hadn't spoken
for nearly a year. Bonnie hadn't minded, not about

the not-speaking nor the affair. Later today, she will
teach the girls how to bake a cake, and the measuring

will count as their math lesson. She taught them to read
using the *NIV Ultimate Bible for Girls: Faithgirlz*

Edition and *Harry Potter*. Bonnie is a very good
mother. The hummingbirds flit, and sunshine pours

over her girls. When Bonnie's husband stopped drinking for good, his dick stopped working too.

To be perfectly honest, Bonnie didn't mind. At least he stopped spending all his money

on loose women in the bars. At least he stopped hitting Bonnie. She could live

without sex. As Bonnie folds her husband's last shirt, she thinks of the young mother across the street

who isn't a Christian and decides to invite the young mother over for a prayer circle.

The young mother can bring her baby but not her dog. The girls love babies, but Bonnie is afraid

of dogs. When the young mother comes, Bonnie will lead them in prayer. They will pray

for Bonnie's husband. They will pray for their children. Bonnie is a good wife, mother,

and neighbor. Turning away from the window, she picks up her husband's shirts and carries them

to the stairs. Her heart flutters way up in her throat like a baby hummingbird. Not from fear.

Because she is blessed. Because she is happy. Bonnie is so happy that she hardly notices she's crying.